

FE Week

28 PAGES
OF NEWS,
INTERVIEWS,
OPINIONS
& JOBS

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SECTOR CHIEF TELLS OF JOBS FEAR AS PROVIDERS FACE 24PC FUNDING CUT

FE WEEK REPORTER
NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Association of Colleges chief executive Martin Doel has told of his fears that more job losses could be about to sweep away FE and skills staff after it was announced provider budgets would be slashed by up to 24 per cent.

He said that with the average college having made 105 redundancies since 2009/10, he feared for the workforce as providers sought to balance their budgets in light of the latest government cut to FE and skills funding.

The Adult Skills Budget (ASB) is to fall 11 per cent next financial year, it was revealed on Thursday (February 26), and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) chief executive Peter Lauener has predicted this will translate to a 17 per cent cut next academic year.

But with £770m of apprenticeship money protected, and traineeship and English and maths funding prioritised, those who offer little or none of this provision could see their allocation, due out in just over a fortnight, fall by up to a quarter — even bigger than last year's 15 per cent cut.

Mr Doel said the cuts were a "further blow to colleges and their current and future students".

He also said that a number of providers were at He said: "An additional major concern is how colleges, after suffering such considerable cuts, can continue to attract and retain the best staff. It is worth noting that the average college has made 105 redundancies since 2009/10 and we fear this figure will grow."

The comments were echoed by Malcolm

Trobe, deputy general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, who said: "The effect on colleges is potentially devastating. This sector has already suffered massive real terms cuts in funding and this announcement will put it under even greater financial pressure. It threatens the very financial stability of some colleges."

Stewart Segal, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said that with the apprenticeship protected "we need to see growth during the year if we are to meet employer demand".

Some providers, he said, are at an early stage of developing their traineeship programmes and therefore their "carry-over will mean that they will require a higher budget for next year". He further warned there would be "huge pressure on the rest of the budgets" with English and maths also prioritised, "inevitably resulting in some groups of learners not being able to access funding and this could include high priority groups such as the unemployed".

Shadow Skills Minister Liam Byrne meanwhile accused the Conservatives of "hollowing out" the ASB, while University and College Union (UCU) general secretary Sally Hunt described the cuts as an "act of wilful vandalism that will decimate FE as we know it today."

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace), said: "It is staggering that there is not more outcry about this drastic and sustained reduction in funding particularly

Continues on page 6



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It's that time again!

The second annual *FE Week* survey launches today with the aim of taking the sector's pulse and delivering the results just in time for the general election on May 7.

And just like last year you could win an iPad Air and an *FE Week* subscription just for taking part.

The state-of-the-nation survey, again just like last year, is a joint project with the Policy Consortium and is open for a fortnight, closing on March 17.

"With the General Election less than ten weeks away, how has the Coalition Government fared in its stewardship of the FE and skills sector?" said Ian Nash, Policy Consortium member, freelance writer and journalist.

"The second annual survey by the Policy Consortium and media partner *FE Week*, launched today, will provide some measure of what staff and managers at all levels and all types of institution think."

The wide-ranging survey embraces issues of governance, funding, Ofsted, learners, curriculum, local enterprise partnerships and plenty more besides.

It is aimed at, but by no means limited to, support staff, lecturers, directors, principals, chief executives and beyond, including those who work in unions, professional bodies and agencies.

Chris Henwood, *FE Week* editor, said: "The astounding success of last year's survey meant there was no option but to do it again this year, especially with the promise of being able to deliver the sector's message to political parties ahead of the election.

"What better reason to determine the views, priorities and moods of those in our sector about what is happening to it, what really matters and, indeed, what keeps those who work within it up at night."

See page 12 for more, including a review of last year's survey findings and how to take part in the 2015 survey

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THE FLAGSHIP CONFERENCE OF NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

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NEWS

TRIBUNAL TRADEMARK VICTORY FORCES COMPANY TO RENAME

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Bosses at Newcastle College have won their tribunal case against a Manchester-registered company forcing it to change its name. They argued there would be “confusion” over the completely separate Newcastle College Limited and wanted it to drop the name.

The general FE (GFE) college complained to Company Names Adjudicator Judy Pike after discovering the firm had registered with Companies House.

A tribunal found in Newcastle College’s favour after Newcastle College Limited failed to respond to requests from the court and ordered a rename.

Newcastle College principal Carole Kitching (pictured) told *FE Week*: “Newcastle College has used the name for more than 40 years after the merger of two older colleges in the city, and it is our registered trademark.”

The issue came to light when a routine search by the college’s intellectual property lawyers discovered someone in Egypt had registered the name Newcastle College Limited with Companies House, using an address at a business park in Manchester.

“We are not aware if they actually tried to trade using the name, but as it is a clear breach of our trademark and would cause obvious confusion we warned them not use our name and applied to the tribunal to get it



changed,” said Ms Kitching.

“We heard nothing back from the company but we are pleased the tribunal agreed with us so they are now prevented from using this as their company name.”

The company was also ordered to pay the college £800 in costs.

FE Week was unable to contact Newcastle College Limited for comment and the case was heard in the company’s absence after it failed to offer any defence or respond to the court.

In her report of the case, Ms Pike said a copy of the GFE college’s application for a name change had been sent to the offending company’s registered address by Royal Mail special delivery on November 27.

“On January 14 the parties were advised that no defence had been received to the application and so the adjudicator may treat the application as not being opposed,” she said.

The company has one month to change its name.

A Department for Business, Innovation and Skills spokesperson said: “If a company declines to change its name after the tribunal has made an order for it to do so ... the tribunal will determine a new name for the company and it will be changed under section 73(4) via a notice which the tribunal issues to Companies House.

“In practice, so far the Tribunal has always chosen the registration number of the company plus the word Limited — for example 01234567 Limited.”

New college procedures ‘not fit for purpose’

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Official procedures to become an incorporated college have been described as “not fit for purpose” by the first person to have used them in more than two decades.

Neil Bates, who last year oversaw the process of his Essex-based Prospects Learning Foundation (PLF) becoming Prospects College of Advanced Technology (Procat), also said the two-decade gap since a new college “indicated a lack of dynamism in the sector”.

He told *FE Week*, which exclusively revealed his plans just over a year before they came to fruition: “The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act [which still sets the rules for incorporation] is not really fit for purpose and the fact that there has not been a new FE college in 22 years suggests a lack of dynamism in the sector.

“We were particularly struck by the fact that neither of the funding agencies or BIS were really geared up to support new entrants or new types of provision.”

His comments echoed the findings of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), which published a ‘lessons learned’ report on Monday (February 23).

It set out the requirements independent learning provider PLF met to become a

college, including a good or outstanding Ofsted judgement, a business plan and a satisfactory provider financial assurance audit review.

It said: “This project was a first in the sector for over 20 years and so as the project developed we were clarifying legislation, regulations, policy and processes internally with PLF and in relation to obtaining ministerial approval.

“The project was also completed within a very short timescale (from the first project board meeting to incorporation was 10 months).

“The process has highlighted lessons learnt in two key areas — the process undertaken and the policy and legislation in place.

“The process currently in place for new incorporations and entrant funding may no longer be appropriate. This is being reviewed as part of a wider project assessing the longer term implications of government policy reform for the FE/skills provider market.”

However, Mr Bates nevertheless praised the “excellent work of the BIS officials who worked with us to ensure a relatively smooth and fast incorporation”.

The 2,000-learner provider was the first new incorporated FE



FE WEEK NEWS IN BRIEF

Capita wins contract

Capita will continue to run Education Funding Agency (EFA) and Skills Funding Agency student support schemes after winning an £8.5m three-year contract.

The contract includes Care to Learn, which provides support towards childcare for under-19s. It also includes the bursary fund for 16 to 19-year-olds and professional and career development loans.

Peter Mucklow, national director for young people at the EFA, said: “We look forward to working with Capita to offer an improved, easy-to-use and streamlined service.”

SFA survey results

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) has published the results of its learner satisfaction survey for 2013/14.

More than 379,500 learners responded. It was open to all post-16 SFA, Education Funding Agency and Offenders’ Learning and Skills Service-funded learners and those on community learning provision. The survey found satisfaction was highest among older learners, female learners, entry level learners and in areas of higher deprivation.

Type in ‘FE Choices’ at www.gov.uk/government/publications for more.

WorldSkills entries open

Entries for the next cycle of the WorldSkills competitions are now open.

Apprentices from more than 30 different skills will have the chance to compete in their chosen trade at the Skills Show in November and possibly the WorldSkills finals in Abu Dhabi in two years.

Taking part in competitions allows apprentices to build on their skills, test their knowledge and display their potential to employers. Entries close on March 20.

Visit www.worldskillsuk.org or email KMoloughney@findafuture.org.uk for details.

college since 492 local authority-maintained institutions underwent the process in 1993 under the previous year’s Further and Higher Education Act.

Julian Gravatt, assistant chief executive for the Association of Colleges, said: “It is important that new colleges build on the high-quality provision already available in the FE sector.

“The government’s case study report on [the former] Prospects College could provide a useful road map for those interested in this option.”

Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) chief executive Stewart Segal said: “Unfortunately, Procat had to change from its Independent learning provider (ILP) status to get an extension to its direct contract, gain access to £1.6m capital and get the support of two research fellowships.

“Investment in providers should not be dependent on the organisational structure. We hope that BIS will learn this lesson when looking at National Colleges as well as the issues around the process.”

A BIS spokesperson said no other ILP was currently undergoing incorporation.

Ofsted ‘sea change’ over college finances

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Ofsted has undergone a “sea change” in the way it looks at college finances, according to a principal who got two good ratings among his headline fields and yet emerged with an inadequate result overall.

Weymouth College, visited by FE Commissioner Dr David Collins over its finances just under a year ago, got grade two findings for outcomes for learners and also quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

But it got a grade four rating overall, and also for effectiveness of leadership and management, with inspectors reporting that “poor strategic management and the failure by governors to hold the previous principal and other senior managers to account in monitoring the financial performance of the college have resulted in a significant budget deficit”.

The report was published on February 18 — three months after Dr Collins called for change at Ofsted if it was to “be more useful” after it rated Bournville College’s leadership outstanding despite a “critical cash position”.

The college had been rated good overall by the education watchdog in May, before Dr Collins visited three months later with an SFA notice of concern having been issued three months before Ofsted went in.

And the Weymouth College report mentioned “finances” or “financial” 18 times, but neither appeared in Bournville’s report.



The difference has led 3,843-learner Weymouth College acting principal Nigel Evans to believe the change Dr Collins called for was now in place.

“It is extremely unusual to have two out of three headline fields rated as good and be inadequate overall,” Mr Evans told *FE Week*.

“This probably marks a sea change in how Ofsted makes its judgements. It previously used to concentrate on academic performance.

“I think we are probably unlucky to have been assessed at this time, but have to accept the judgement as one of our briefs is to manage our finances.”

Nevertheless, an Ofsted spokesperson denied it had changed the way it considers financial issues when grading.

“Ofsted inspectors use their professional judgement when coming to conclusions about a provider,” he said, but declined to comment on whether this made inspections



too subjective.

The situation has resulted in a call for more clarity on how Ofsted looks at finances.

Gill Clipson, deputy chief executive at the Association of Colleges, said: “Ofsted currently judges the effectiveness of an institution in terms of the performance of students.

“If judgements are now being made on financial performance then we need clarity about the criteria that are being used and assurance about the expertise of the inspectors.”

Ofsted declined to comment on whether it would update its guidance.

It came after Weymouth’s previous principal, Liz Myles, was suspended in November — around six months after Dr Collins identified “significant weaknesses” in leadership.

He visited after the Skills Funding Agency



assessed college finances as inadequate and he recommended, among other things, that “the principal should engage a ‘peer mentor’ with a good financial track record to assist her in dealing with the college’s present financial situation”.

A college spokesperson told *FE Week* Ms Myles would be “leaving Weymouth College following her resignation due to retirement being accepted by the board of governors”.

No date has been confirmed for when her permanent replacement will be announced.

Only one other provider has been rated as inadequate overall while receiving good judgements in the same two headline fields as Weymouth.

The report, on Gloucestershire’s Ruskin Mill College, part of the Ruskin Mill Educational Trust Ltd charity which had 110 learners when it was inspected in March last year, did not mention finances either.

PREDICTABILITY PLEA AS JUST 15 PC AFFECTED AFTER CLAWBACK WARNING

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The Association of Colleges (AoC) has supported Skills Funding Agency plans to make its funding system more “predictable” after it emerged that just 14 per cent of providers issued with a shock clawback warning were actually be asked to repay.

Una Bennett, deputy director for funding systems for the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), wrote to 699 providers before Christmas warning they might have to repay against “provision that has been incorrectly claimed”.

Providers were later emailed by funding and programmes director Keith Smith, who apologised for the “premature” warning and asked them to go over submitted ILR data and tell the SFA before the end of last month if they needed to make any repayments.

And the SFA revealed on Wednesday (February 25) that it estimated a total of £500,000 needed to be repaid by 98 providers and it had “resolved the identified issues” with the remaining 601 who wouldn’t have to return any 2013/14 cash.

An SFA spokesperson said: “This work has also highlighted the need for simplifying the system further and we will be working with the sector to do this.”

Julian Gravatt, assistant chief executive of the AoC, told *FE Week*: “It is important that data errors are corrected.

“Helpfully, the SFA acknowledge that there

is more work to do to make their funding system more predictable.

“Given that the adult skills budget is currently in freefall, this task has become more urgent.”

Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) chief executive Stewart Segal said he was “pleased that the vast majority of providers will not be subject to a clawback”.

“We hope that in the cases where one is required, providers will have an opportunity to discuss the final calculations,” he said.

“We also hope that cashflow issues will be taken into account to protect the learners.”

Ms Bennett’s letter provoked an outraged response on the SFA’s Feconnect online forum, where users complained her correspondence was sent after the SFA’s own auditors signed-off provider accounts last autumn and did not specify how much needed to be repaid.

The subsequent apology by Mr Smith also came under fire on the forum, with one user complaining that she had suffered “sleepless nights” over the issue.

The SFA spokesperson said: “We would like to thank the sector for working with us to ensure that data submitted is accurate. This is important to ensure that any funds incorrectly claimed in error can be recycled back into the system, under our performance management processes, to ensure all public funds are maximised.”

‘Careers advisers who don’t promote apprenticeships should be fired’

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Failure to promote apprenticeships and traineeships should result in the sack for careers advisers, House of Commons Education Select Committee chair Graham Stuart (pictured below) has said.

During a debate secured by the Association of Colleges and All-Party Parliamentary Group for FE and lifelong learning chair Stephen Lloyd MP, Mr Stuart said schools needed a bigger incentive to offer comprehensive careers advice, including non-academic routes.

He said: “The heart of the problem is a simple one, in my opinion — it doesn’t come out in the myriad of reports that have been produced on this subject or indeed in enough speeches given by colleagues in this chamber. The problem is there are insufficient incentives for schools to take it seriously.”

He added: “We have got to change the accountability regime to a high-stakes environment in which you very easily get publicly humiliated or sacked.”



His comments on February 25 came after the 2011 Education Act made it an explicit requirement of schools to promote apprenticeships and traineeships in careers advice, and Mr Stuart said the majority of schools were failing to get it right.

“The central issue is that schools aren’t incentivised to take it seriously and they have some perverse incentives like filling their sixth form places which means they won’t even let colleges in,” he said.

Shadow Junior Education Minister Yvonne Fovargue (pictured below) agreed and paid tribute to the work of South Gloucestershire and Stroud College.

She said: “The fact is that we need more than an unenforced duty on schools, which simply leads to buck-passing. One-in-three teachers says they do not have the right expertise and resources to adequately provide effective information, advice and guidance.”

She added: “I visited the Bristol campus of South Gloucestershire and Stroud College the other month. The college has an excellent careers hub, working with schools across the area — independent schools, academies, state-controlled schools and primary schools — and providing one-to-one advice from professional careers advisers, which it employs.

“The college is the point of contact for all employers, it works with the local enterprise partnership, and it is considering expanding its service. It is an excellent model for the careers advice of the future.”



Teen confronts politicians over sixth form college VAT

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A 17-year-old learner put School Reform Minister Nick Gibb and Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt on the spot as he called for VAT “justice” at a Sixth Form Colleges’ Association (SFCA) parliamentary reception.

Callum Fairhurst, who is studying business, history and politics A-levels at Long Road Sixth Form College, in Cambridge, delivered a powerful speech (pictured inset right) at the event, aiming his final remarks directly at Mr Gibb and Mr Hunt, who were both in the audience.

Around 160 guests, including principals, governors and other MPs, heard Callum raise the key SFCA issue, with the government continuing to charge sixth form colleges (SFCs) VAT while schools and academies get a 20 per cent refund.

“Academies don’t have to pay VAT and I think that’s right. SFCs that attach to schools don’t have to pay VAT and I agree with that,” he said.

“It’s not fair [that SFCs have to pay]. Nick, Tristram — if there is one thing you take from what I say, it should be that you need to drop the learning tax. What I’m asking isn’t for a favour — it’s for justice to be served.”

Mr Gibb later told him: “We want to do something about it. The issue is how to fund it. It’s an anomaly we would like to address, but it would be costly.”

Mr Hunt also declined to provide a guarantee that his party would drop VAT for SFCs if it won the general election on May 7 when questioned after the student’s speech by *FE Week*.

However, he had earlier told guests during his own address: “When we enter government we will immediately get to work to see if we can find the funds which I know bedevil your sector in terms of VAT. There’s no logic to it, there’s no defence of it.”

James Kewin, SFCA deputy chief executive, said: “Callum was absolutely right to urge Mr Gibb and Mr Hunt to drop the learning tax — redirecting funding away from the front line education of students to pay VAT is nonsensical.”

He added: “We now need all political parties to make a firm commitment to drop the learning tax.”

The aim of the event, held in the House of Commons Terrace Pavilion overlooking the River Thames, was to celebrate the achievements of SFCs and provide a chance for networking between principals and governors.

It was hosted by Labour MP Kelvin Hopkins, chair of the all-party parliamentary group for SFCs and vice-chair of governors at Luton Sixth Form College. He called for more SFCs in his speech, which opened the event.

He said: “There are many wonderful SFCs, many of them represented here today. They do a brilliant job but are still not fully appreciated by government. That’s why I hope the government and opposition members here today will take note.

“They should be nurtured and treasured by



Clockwise from above — from left: Learner Callum Fairhurst and School Reform Minister Nick Gibb, Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt, SFCA chief executive David Igoe and Labour MP Kelvin Hopkins



all who care about education and the success of our young people. I have argued that the government should, rather than just seeking to look after them, establish more SFCs and expand the sector.”

David Igoe, SFCA chief executive, praised the achievements of sector staff.

He said: “You represent your staff who do such wonderful work for the 160,000 16 to 18-year-old young people being educated in SFCs at this moment.

“We outperform all other state funded and non-selected sectors on nearly every important indicator. We do it at a price and in a style that represents the very best value to the tax payer and the treasury.”

But he warned: “This event is both an opportunity for celebration of our success and to issue a plea to policy makers for fairer treatment [over VAT payments] because you know and I know that we are in real danger

now of being squeezed to breaking point.”

The SFCA’s Drop the Learning Tax campaign petition launched before Christmas and has been signed by more than 14,500 people including Oscar-winning actor Colin Firth, X Factor presenter Dermot O’Leary and Education Select Committee chair Graham Stuart.

And the event, on February 24, came the day after a House of Lords debate on the issue in which Baroness King said: “My Lords, is it not strange, not to mention unjust, that a 16-year-old studying at a secondary school receives more funding than a 16 year-old studying exactly the same subjects at a SFC [because SFCs pay VAT]?”

“Is this not doubly strange when research shows that sixth form colleges provide better education outcomes and better value for money and do more to improve social mobility?”



And Skills Minister Nick Boles said he was prepared to discuss the matter with the “fierce” Treasury as he answered Mr Hopkins during an education questions session at the House of Commons in January.

Apprentices' 'measly' 2.6pc min wage rise

BY FREDDIE WHITTAKER & REBECCA COONEY
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A proposed 2.6 per cent rise in the National Minimum Wage for apprentices has been branded "measly" by National Union of Students (NUS) vice president for FE Joe Vinson (pictured below).

The Low Pay Commission (LPC) has put a £2.80 an-hour minimum to the government while rejecting Business Secretary Vince Cable's proposal to shift apprentices up onto a par with the 16 and 17-year-olds' rate — currently at £3.79 an-hour.

The LPC argued that such a move could affect 200,000 apprentices with the cost to employers hitting at least £160m each year, possibly "much more".

Mr Vinson said: "A measly 2.6 per cent increase from £2.73 to £2.80 an-hour for apprentices in their first year and those aged 16 to 18 will do nothing to help the cost of living crisis that apprentices are currently facing.

"It's appalling to see a rejection of raising the apprentice minimum wage to the 16 to 17-year-old rate. The fact the LPC admits that a rise would benefit nearly 200,000 apprentices is an overwhelming reason to do it."

Just days before the LPC recommendations were released the NUS

had already issued a damning report on the issue of apprentice pay, labelling the current minimum wage of £2.73 an-hour "exploitative".

The 21-page Forget Me Not report (pictured below right) painted a bleak picture of apprentice finances and called for the scrapping of the apprentice minimum wage, arguing that learners "should be entitled to at least the national minimum wage for their age".

It also recommended, among other things, free transport for all 16 to 19-year-olds and extending the bursaries available to students in FE to apprentices. Mr Vinson said: "Paying apprentices such an exploitative wage has led to the situation we are in at the moment, where apprentices are forced to work in the evening to make enough to live and run up huge credit card debts because they're excluded from student bank accounts."

With the Apprentice Pay Survey 2014 having showed how younger apprentices were being hit hardest by minimum wage non-compliance as nearly a quarter were underpaid, the LPC said it had been asked by Dr Cable to consider

whether the structure of the apprentice rate could be simplified in "order to improve compliance".

It agreed with the Business Secretary that higher-level apprentices should earn the 'normal' worker national minimum wage,

for which a 20p rise to £6.70 was recommended, but said there were "significant risks" in merging the apprentice rate with that 16 and 17-year-olds.

"It would mean an unprecedentedly large increase in the value of the rate, of between 39 and 88 per cent," said the report.

It added: "The cost to employers would be at least £160m each year and could be much more. That would be

around half the total cost of the recommended increase in the adult rate, and at a time when there are other funding pressures on employers in England from possible mandatory cash contributions to training."

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills said it had "gone all out to support apprentices".

A spokesperson said: "The government will now consider the LPC's recommendations and respond in March. Once the government has responded, the regulations to change the rates will be debated in Parliament before the new rates are introduced on October 1."



BIS issues new list of named and shamed underpaying bosses

Apprenticeship employers were among the latest round of offenders named and shamed for failing to pay the national minimum wage.

Business Minister Jo Swinson named 70 employers who had failed to pay the minimum wage. They owed workers a total of more than £157,000 and have been hit with more than £70,000 in financial penalties.

A BIS spokesperson told *FE Week* that "some of the employee underpayment cases did involve apprentices" but she declined to identify individuals or each of the firms.

It brings the total number of companies identified as minimum wage offenders to 162 since the naming and shaming regime came into force in October two years ago.

Ms Swinson said: "Naming and shaming gives a clear warning to employers who ignore the rules, that they will face reputational consequences as well as financial penalties."

She added "We are helping workers recover the hundreds of thousands of pounds in pay owed to them as well as raising awareness to make sure workers are paid fairly in the first place."

The government has also announced a £3m increase in HM Revenue & Customs' £9.2m minimum wage enforcement budget to help fund more than 70 extra compliance officers.



STEPS TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE FROM TRAINEESHIPS TO APPRENTICESHIPS

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Continued from front

Financial year (April - March)	As published in Feb 2014			Published Feb 26	Shift from 14-15 to 15-16	
	2013-14 £000's	2014-15 £000's	2015-16 indicative	2015-16 £000's	£000s	%
Adult Skills Budget	£2,467,875	£2,258,311	£2,004,547	£2,008,528	-£249,783	-11%
Employer Ownership	£46,000	£73,400	£73,400	£86,000	£12,600	17%
24+ Advanced Learning Loans	£129,000	£398,000	£498,000	£498,000	£100,000	25%
Offender Learning and Skills	£130,400	£128,900	£128,900	£128,900	£0	0%
Community Learning	£210,747	£210,747	£210,747	£215,747	£5,000	2%
European Social Fund	£171,000	£173,000	£170,000	£170,000	-£3,000	-2%
Total: Teaching and learning	£3,155,022	£3,242,358	£3,085,594	£3,107,175	-£135,183	-4%
Learner Support	£176,800	£205,507	£174,342	£172,842	-£32,665	-16%
National Careers Service	£87,868	£90,878	£90,878	£90,878	£0	0%
Skills infrastructure	£55,161	£58,900	£23,675	£23,175	-£35,725	-61%
Funding to support the FE (incl. UKCES)	£156,706	£125,004	£81,983	£107,402	-£17,602	-14%
Capital grants and Skills Capital	£449,871	£414,857	£410,000	£410,000	-£4,857	-1%
Grand total	£4,081,428	£4,137,504	£3,866,472	£3,911,472	-£226,032	-5%

given the clear consensus about the genuine threat that crippling skills gaps and shortages pose for UK economic growth.”

And Dr Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), said the cut “looked like nothing less than a deliberate attempt to destroy the sector”. “It has already been battered by excessive cuts,” she said.

Joe Vinson, National Union of Students’ vice president for FE, said: “It’s appalling the government wants to reduce investment in skills when we need to stimulate the economy and give people the opportunity to gain work.”

Dr Lynne Sedgmore CBE, executive director of the 157 Group, said the predicted cuts meant she was looking at “new forms of social investment to sustain the future of high quality and accessible skills training for all”.

“We are working with the government to ascertain where legislative change may be needed in order to achieve this vision and to support the simplification of processes that may currently prevent innovation,” she said.

A spokesperson for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills conceded the cuts would be “challenging for the sector”.

But, she said: “The sector was made aware at the time of the last spending review that government funding was reducing and of the need to look to generate other income streams, creating sustainable business models for the future. Private investment in skills training is high so government funding — although important — is not the only funding available.”

See editor’s comment on page 8

See page 19 for an expert piece by Mick Fletcher

Cable calls for crackdown on ‘short-term tactical subcontracting’

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Business Secretary Vince Cable has called on the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to crack down on “short-term tactical subcontracting”.

The warning came as part of the skills funding letter, and followed a raft of changes to the funding rules, released at the beginning of February.

In the letter, Dr Cable wrote: “While we appreciate that you [SFA] have worked with the sector to enhance the controls around subcontracting in the last two years, there continues to be levels of short term tactical subcontracting that are causing concern.”

He added: “You should review the use of subcontracting with a view to recommending further action, for implementation in 2015/16, to mitigate the risks of subcontracting and to ensure funding is allocated appropriately.”

No one from the SFA was available to confirm whether this review was under way.

Dr Cable also ordered the SFA to name and shame subcontractors where provision had been so poor it had been forced to terminate the contract.

In 2013, a promised blacklist of subcontractors the SFA had forbidden prime contractors from working with failed to materialise after the SFA said it had not banned any providers.

The new rules state providers “must

not subcontract to meet short-term funding objectives” and said they “must robustly manage and monitor all of your subcontractors to ensure high-quality delivery is taking place”.

An Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) spokesperson told *FE Week*: “Issues around subcontracting are likely to be minimised if lead contractors are already fully adhering to the existing SFA rules... and if the SFA is seen to be enforcing them.”

He added AELP would like to see more contractors routinely referring to the sector’s Common Accord for supply chain management best practice.

An Association of Colleges spokesperson said: “The rules that are being put in place are an attempt to ensure all subcontracting arrangements are signed off by the board of governors.”

“We will continue to work closely with the SFA to ensure rule changes are workable.”

A spokesperson for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) said: “The enhanced controls do not seek to reduce subcontracting, but aim to ensure all publicly-funded provision is of high quality... while protecting public money.”

An SFA spokesperson said it would “act in accordance with the skills funding letter and will continue to work closely with BIS on subcontracting policy”.

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Byrne gives 16 to 19 ringfence assurance

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Shadow Skills Minister Liam Byrne has pledged a Labour Government would not raid the 16 to 19 budget to pay for early years' or schools provision.

Labour had promised to include 16 to 19 provision within an education budget ringfence, which currently ends at 16, but had not previously committed to protecting it from being raided for other provision.

However, at the City & Guilds' Skills Debate For Prosperity and Growth at London's Mansion House on Wednesday (February 26), Mr Byrne went one step further, saying the 16 to 19 budget would be protected within the ringfence.

He told *FE Week* Labour "would not" take from the 16 to 19 budget to fund other learning within the same ringfence, adding the party's policy was "about an £8bn spend on FE 16 to 19 provision".

"If you protect it in real terms, that means you grow the 16 to 19 budget by £400m over the course of the next parliament," he said.

The Liberal Democrats were the first to announce a plan to include 16 to 19 provision in the education budget ringfence but stopped short of pledging specific protection within the ringfence, although in June a spokesperson said that to move large amounts of money from one end of the wider age group to the other was not "consistent with the policy".

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan has said the Conservatives would maintain the ringfence for five to 16-year-olds earlier, but did not commit to protection for early years or FE budgets.

Mr Byrne's comments followed a Question Time-style panel debate, which also included Skills Minister Nick Boles, Liberal Democrat Sal Brinton, Confederation of British Industry director general John Cridland, Trades' Union Congress general secretary Frances O'Grady, and was chaired by journalist Andrew Neil.

The debate, in front of an audience of around 150, focussed on how to solve the skills gap — an issue which Mr Neil said was "vital to our future and our economy".

On the eve of the release of the skills funding letter [see front], many audience members raised questions about how the FE sector would continue to deliver the training needed to boost UK skills in the face of predicted cuts.



Although the contents of the letter had not yet been revealed, Mr Boles said: "I don't suppose it'll surprise anyone to learn that there are some bigish cuts to everything except apprenticeships."

However, he pointed to government protection and growth of apprenticeships.

He said: "If you are in the business of providing FE, and you moved into apprenticeships in a big way, then you have moved into a fuller stream of government funding, but if you have stayed traditional full time FE and not diversified then you will have had to make some very difficult cuts in budgets."

Mr Cridland also called for changes to full time vocational qualifications and to GCSEs.

He said: "If the participation age is being raised to 18, what is the point of having terminal exams at 16?"

"We should abolish GCSEs and rebrand high quality vocational qualifications as vocational A-levels — they are a recognised gold standard."

Ms O'Grady said there had been too much change in the system under successive governments saying skills problems were "deep-rooted and long-running but the last thing many of us want is another rearranging of the deck chairs".

However, Mr Boles argued there had been "a certain amount of consensus and

Clockwise from top: From left: Liam Byrne and Andrew Neil. From left: Sal Brinton, Nick Boles, Liam Byrne, Andrew Neil, Frances O'Grady, John Cridland. Sal Brinton and Nick Boles. Frances O'Grady and John Cridland. Photos: Nick Kay



continuity" between recent governments.

"The most important element of that is on the increasing importance of English and maths, without which nothing else works," he said.

"David Blunkett years ago started his review focussing on English and maths and we've carried out reviews and we're insisting everyone continuing English and maths until they reach a certain standard."

Lady Brinton told *FE Week* a focus on literacy should include English for Speakers of Other Languages (Esol) provision, but said the funding should be directed through Local Enterprise Partnerships.

"Then the funding can respond to local needs — there's no point in providing the same level of Esol in Cornwall and Devon as there is in inner-city Birmingham," she said.

Ms O'Grady also called for employers to be made to offer more workplace training.

"A third of employers don't train at all," she said.

"We need to recognise that the voluntary approach to investment in skills has failed.

"The picture on employer investment has not shifted substantially and in fact is getting worse so we need to tackle the idea that if left to the market there will be a rescue because frankly there isn't."



FE WEEK COMMENT

No more second chances

There was no real surprise in the 5 per cent overall budget cut and little shock at the 11 per cent fall in the next financial year’s adult skills budget.

The SFA said this would look like translating into a 17 per cent cut to academic year allocations — but apprenticeships, traineeships and English and maths are the government order of the day so if you provide little or none of these expect your funding to fall by up to a quarter.

And while some question why these are prioritised, others question why higher education appears relatively unscathed and others still ask why older learners under BIS’s care aren’t afforded the same funding protection as that enjoyed by (some) DfE learners.

It’s not as if current funding levels are having no effect — just ask retiring157 Group executive director Dr Lynne Sedgmore to tell you about the rumour of 50 colleges in financial turmoil.

Jobs and provision might offer uncomfortable savings, but just how much more can be cut?

FE and skills has long been trying to shake off the Cinderella sector cliché, but what the government is instead discarding without the sector’s consent is its proud position as the ‘second chance’ saloon for adults to get on in life.

Chris Henwood
chris.henwood@feweek.co.uk

TOP SKILLS FUNDING LETTER TWEETS

- @Stephen_EvansUK
Given how vital skills are, #skillsfundingletter cuts to public funding only work if effort put into upping individual & employer investment
- @patrickmoule
Non-apprenticeships adult skills budget due to be cut by 24% in 15/16; tells you all you need to know about this gov
- @Jill_Westerman
#saveadulthoodeducation. We need second chances for adult learners, but these are fewer and fewer due to @skillsfunding cuts
- @bobharrisonset
24% cut to Adult Skills budget+failure of Adult loans is a DISASTER for Adult learners ... Adults vote too @ NickBolesMP
- @DavidNeal8
Expected, but tough times ahead



Commissioner suggests college help to Marine Society

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The FE Commissioner has called for a distance learning provider to work with an FE college and raised doubts about the quality of its subcontractor of 35 years.

Commissioner Dr David Collins visited the Marine Society College of the Sea in December after the 260-learner college had been slapped with an Ofsted inadequate grading the previous month.

Inspectors found the designated specialist college, which is based in Lambeth and offers courses including GCSEs and A-levels to professional seafarers, was failing to monitor learners’ progress effectively, or achieve high success rates — findings echoed by Dr Collins.

In his report, he said: “The leadership team should develop closer links with the FE sector by working with a college that understands their situation and can advise them on how to manage learners and their progress better.”

And both Ofsted and the commissioner criticised the relationship the college — which has a current Skills Funding Agency (SFA)

allocation of nearly £160,000, but is otherwise learner-funded — with its distance learning subcontractor of 35 years, the National Extension College (NEC). Mr Collins said the College of the Sea, previously rated as good in 2009, had an “over-reliance” on NEC and had “not monitored subcontracted provision effectively”, while NEC had “not met the standards required in its provision”. He added: “Targets should be set, and if not met, the college should consider a change in provider.”

The college’s post-Ofsted action plan included targets to raise success rates from 23 per cent to 70 per cent in the next three years and to monitor learners’ progress on a monthly basis.

The Marine Society’s director of lifelong learning Mark Windsor (pictured) told *FE Week*: “Our performance at Ofsted in regard to our GCSE and A-level learning provision is disappointing. However, we are very clear on what we must do, confident we can do it and that our services remain well suited to the needs of seafarers.”

Ros Morpeth, chief executive



of Cambridge-based NEC, said she “rejected” the commissioner’s claim NEC provision was substandard. However, she said NEC had a “commitment” to “make improvements on a clear time scale” and, with the Marine Society, was “actively addressing” issues the commissioner raised. Ms Morpeth also claimed the low success rates were due to the flexible nature of the course, where learners can enrol at any point and choose how long they take to complete their course.

“Inspection criteria are based on the assumption that you’ve got a fixed cohort of students coming in at a fixed time and having a fixed period of time to complete their course and therefore you can see very quickly what the success criteria are,” she said.

“Whereas when you’ve got a rolling enrolment and the students have more control over how long they want to take then it’s harder to pull out these hard facts and figures that Ofsted quite rightly wants.”

The commissioner is expected to conduct a progress review in July.

COMMENTS

Unionlearn rejects Labour apprenticeship policy as AELP looks five years ahead

Scrapping the level two will surely devalue the apprenticeship framework further with employers.

It’s already losing its shine with the blurring of “real apprenticeships” and work-based learners.

A level three has always been seen as a first step into management quals and I suspect that in old NVQ-speak the candidates wouldn’t or shouldn’t yet be able to demonstrate the required range in those competences.

Adrian Oldfield

Digital skills and the make-or-break challenge for the FE and skills sector

I believe that Lady Morgan has got it in one — as have many before her, for example Ken Boston 2004, then chief executive for QCA.

But until the sector is ‘forced’ to change, it won’t, especially colleges with regard to vocational courses, which they largely treat as a ‘fill-in’.

If they were not rewarded for failure, perhaps they might recognise what the ‘real world’ expects of them. But not holding my breath.

Colin Gallagher

Ed Miliband to pledge ‘apprenticeship guarantee’ to deliver 80,000 extra annual starts by 2020

I think the Labour Party need to carefully consider how the large variability in success rates for apprenticeships up and down the country will impact on young people and adults wishing to reskill. Given the recent revelations of grade 1 providers dropping down to grade 3/4 in their last Ofsted inspection, Labour will need to exercise caution if they intend to allocate growth to only ‘good’ providers

Dean Carey

Dear

Dr Sue

Email DrSue@feweek.co.uk for help from sector agony aunt Sue Pember on the third Monday of every month. The best question wins a £100 Amazon gift card

Professor Wolf says more to be done on employer involvement

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Professor Alison Wolf has called for more to be done to involve employers in college assessment and delivery after the government reported for the last time on progress in implementing reforms in her 2011 review of vocational education.

She also stood by her study programmes recommendation, which has prompted a rise in the number of learners taking up English and maths in an effort to gain at least a C grade GCSE or equivalent.

One of Professor Wolf's recommendations for colleges was that the "assessment and awarding processes used for vocational awards should involve local employers on a regular basis".

But, she told *FE Week*: "I'm not sure what else government could have done because our bizarre system it is to a large extent up to the awarding bodies and after that to Ofsted, but I don't feel we have made as much progress as I would have liked in getting employers really involved in the assessment and delivery in 16 to 18 vocational education in colleges.

"I want us to get to a place, as in say Denmark or indeed France, that when you are doing your final exams on a level two or three vocational, occupational qualification, it is routine that employers are involved, not at the



Elatt chief executive Anthony Harmer (front row, centre right, light shirt) celebrates with staff

Elation as Elatt celebrates outstanding clean sweep

An adult and community learning provider has celebrated top marks across the board from Ofsted.

The 260-learner East London Advanced Technology Training (Elatt), which received a grade two rating following its last inspection in April 2009, held a get-together on Wednesday night (pictured) to mark the achievement.

Anthony Harmer, chief executive at the not-for-profit organisation, said: "We will continue to sustain our inspirational teaching and strive for even

higher standards by maximising our affiliations with employers, other charities and voluntary organisations. I am extremely proud of everyone that has contributed to this significant achievement."

The Ofsted report praised impressive leadership at the provider, which runs courses on web design, computer engineering, office skills, pathways to care, English and essential skills, work skills and employability, among others, from entry to advanced level.

national level, but the local level."

Professor Wolf defended study programmes, which were implemented last August and have seen the number of learners aged 16 to 19 requiring additional English and maths tuition rocket, adding: "I certainly didn't expect learners to be put in for four GCSE resits in the course of two years, but I think that's right."

Of the 27 recommendations made by Professor Wolf in 2011, the government claims

20 are in place, another is partly enacted, while six are in the process of implementation.

Professor Wolf said: "I would not have expected, from my knowledge of government, that so many of my recommendations would have been put through with thought, and care and speed, and they were."

Deborah Ribchester, senior 14 to 19 curriculum policy manager at the Association of Colleges (AoC), said study programmes had

presented colleges with a "major challenge" in finding extra teachers and exam facilities, but that she recognised "the benefit it will bring to students". She said: "Continuous professional development for maths teachers, also recommended by Professor Wolf, means staff will be better able to support these students."

See page 17 for an expert piece on direct recruitment



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PROFILE



There's too much training going on, certificates being given, and no job at the end of it



ROYALLY DECORATED DUO

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For any organisation to have a member of staff awarded an MBE among the New Year Honours is fortunate — but to have two looks like real commitment to a cause.

And in the case of Kevin McLoughlin and Jean Duprez that cause is skills training.

The duo were recognised last year and this year, respectively, for their roles at London-based K&M McLoughlin Decorating, where he is founder and managing director while she is manager.

"We haven't even sat down to realise the implications of two people in the same company being awarded something from the Queen — it's just so surreal," says mum-of-two Duprez, aged 45.

"But it's great, because everything that we do here, we're just really proud of it."

The firm, set up in 1988, employs 160 staff in total, including six tutors who help

deliver Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) apprenticeships in painting and decorating and a five-week City & Guilds pre-employment programme for 18 to 24-year-olds.

It started delivering intermediate apprenticeships in 2009 for its own staff and other painting and decorating firms. Meanwhile, 269 people have emerged with new or improved job skills from its three-year-old pre-employment programme.

Prime contractors City and Islington College and the CITB both use the firm, which has 10 apprentices at the moment, with current academic year contracts of £61k and £40k, respectively.

And even Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg is an admirer, having name-dropped the firm at Lib Dem conference two years ago.

"I started taking on apprentices in the mid-90s because the age gap in the workforce was getting too much — so I thought I need to train people. It's just natural," says 57-year-old McLoughlin, who has five children.

Here, the company began experience complaints familiar to many employers — learners' training not meeting industry standard or learners having issues with time keeping, attitudes and work ethic.

"We are a painting and decorating

"We are a painting and decorating contractor and a small to medium-sized enterprise simple as that, but had to — for our own industry and to survive — go down this training route"

contractor and a small to medium-sized enterprise simple as that, but had to — for our own industry and to survive — go down this training route," says Duprez, who started working for K&M McLoughlin Decorating in 2002.

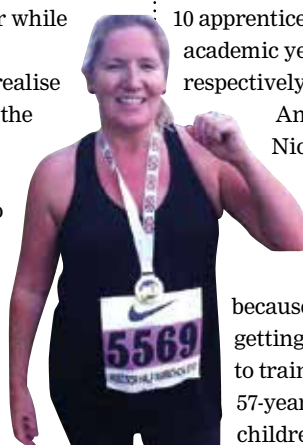
"We had apprentices, but we realised they were going to all these different colleges all over London and our learners weren't coming out as fit for purpose.

"So we decided to do some extra training with them, at internal cost, like putting them on a development programme that we could run ourselves."

It's a potted history offered up to me at the firm's Islington training centre, which opened in 2012.

But as the duo, united in their royal honours, lay their company history before me amid a rabbit warren setting of interconnected rainbow-coloured rooms in which trainees practice, the first thing that strikes me is the difference between them.

She is effusive as we talk about training and her pauses in which to slip a question in are few and far between, while his words are





It's a personal thing

What is your favourite book, and why?

JD: This sounds very crazy, but I read the London Encyclopaedia a lot. I first picked one up when I was about 25 at a car boot sale and it was really musty, but it literally has anything you need to know. I love London, so it's a great book. Other than that I'm a speed reader so I just eat them very quickly

KM: I don't read a lot, but I do read about psychology, even though it takes me ages, and anthropology, and I really like Lateral Thinking by Edward de Bono — just about different ways of thinking

What do you do to switch off from work?

JD: I chat a lot in the day, so I stop chatting — I go home and I like peace. I love music, I love champagne, and I like a party and a dinner. Also I love to travel

KM: I do yoga. I drink. I like football — I'm born locally so I support Arsenal

What's your pet hate?

JD: I can't stand the telly being on in the background when there's nothing that anybody wants to watch. Or when you flick and flick until you find something half way through a programme that you might want to watch. I know exactly when I want to put the telly on, and it's very rare

KM: Bigots. I've met loads in my life, in this industry. When I first started work in the 1970s, I always worked with a lot of West Indians. And that was when racism was rife and that kind of sat with me

If you could invite anyone to a dinner party, living or dead, who would it be?

JD: I wanted to be clever, but as soon as I saw the question I thought of my dad. He died when I was 18 years old and I'd love to tell him what I've done with my life. And he was in the construction industry too, so I'd like to ask him a few questions about how it has changed

KM: Winston Churchill. Other than that I meet a lot of famous people doing what I do now, I suppose — parliamentarians and secretaries of state or whatever, and to be honest none of them phase me. I don't think I'd prefer to go out with any of them over my friends

What did you want to be when you grew up?

JD: An air hostess

KM: I wanted to be a practising atheist because I hated being sent to church on a Sunday morning. I am a total non-believer, but I can see the powerful good that religion does to people



Clockwise from top: From left: Duprez's brother Ian, Duprez aged 11, father Robert, mother Carmel, brother Steve and grandmother Maggie in Ireland. Duprez aged five at Laleham Campsite in Surrey. From left, back: McLoughlin, son Ross, wife Maxine, and sons Jack and Joe. Front: daughter in law Verity and daughter Emma. McLoughlin aged five.

Below left: Duprez completing the London half marathon in 2013

Below right: From left: Duprez aged six and brothers Ian and Steve

similarly sparse, but uttered with quiet force.

Despite these marked differences, or perhaps because of them, Duprez says the chalk-and-cheese duo work well together.

“We make a great team,” she says.

“As a boss, Kevin's great. He knows what my passions are, and where I am, and he doesn't try to close your voice down or make you tow the company line. So you can imagine how freeing that is when I'm meeting with people.”

Meanwhile McLoughlin describes Duprez as his “main man”.

“She understands everything,” he says.

“She knows what we started, what I wanted to do, and she supports it. But if she doesn't like something, or she doesn't agree, she will say it.

“And we work well together — as long as we stay out of the pub.”

And the issue of work draws this duo together, albeit in criticism of the FE and skills record on job preparation.

“There's too much training going on, certificates being given, and no job at the end of it,” says Duprez.

“The government has got to stop putting

money into training where there is no job opportunity — work experience is not what this is about.

“You've got to have that company ready to say, ‘If that young person gets to this route, I'm going to give them a chance’.”

McLoughlin takes up the case, saying: “There should be a line. As I see it, simplicity.

“You're born, you go to school, afterwards college or university, or you get a job, whatever happens you get a job — so therefore the whole teaching thing should be about getting people ready for work to lead a decent life.

“I see too many cases here continuously where the education system has failed our learners, and then they go to the FE colleges, which again will hold them for their funding, and then they release them onto the market and they have got no chance of getting a job.

“If FE and schools were aligned to business, there should be a conveyor belt into work.”

These are words based on McLoughlin's own experience.

School didn't appeal to him and he struggled with what he has only recently realised was undiagnosed dyslexia.

“I absolutely hated it,” he says, and despite being in the top set he left at 15.

With the family needing money, McLoughlin embarked on the first of only two jobs he'd ever had in his life.

“I left school on a Friday, started work on a Monday as a messenger boy in a Fleet Street printing press,” he says.

“It was great, I worked on the Daily Mail and the Evening News [now the Evening Standard], and it was just a hive of activity.”

However, after three months, he realised that with the strong printing unions, which notoriously made it difficult for anyone without family in the trade to get in, he was unlikely to progress.

So he left and went to work as a painting apprentice for Islington



Council, through Hackney College.

“I didn't particularly like that because it was back into school again, but it was one day a week, and I stuck with it — and I'm glad I did,” he says.

Meanwhile, Duprez grew up on the nearby Lisson Green estate which she describes as a “concrete jungle”.

Despite this, she looks back with fond memories.

“It was great growing up there. I went camping every other weekend and when we weren't camping, over the winter months, I would go to the dogs at Walthamstow with my granddad,” she says.

“I wasn't trying to get away from anything, and I wasn't trying to say ‘I've got to do something better’ — I had a great childhood.”

Despite this, she says “where you're from shouldn't pigeonhole you”.

“I think I and my brother, who runs his own company, are testament that you can be whatever you want to be,” she says.

“But sometimes you just need to meet the right teacher to unlock it, somebody who sees that little bit of potential.”

Survey offers opportunity for ‘considered critique of current policies and strategies’

The first survey, Taking the pulse of education — the Great FE and Skills Survey of 2014, drew attention to serious shortcomings and misgivings, writes Ian Nash.

People responding used it to give a considered critique of current policies and strategies, not as an opportunity for a whinge-fest.

It is, therefore, worth reminding *FE Week* readers of some key findings (reported in edition 100 of *FE Week*, dated April 28, 2014 — see right) in advance of the 2015 survey.

Three concerns stood out, in well over a thousand responses, as meriting serious attention.

First, there were extremely high levels of concern over institutional funding, notably among the most senior staff best placed to measure the impact of spending cuts.

With pre-16 budgets protected, universities funded through fees and apprenticeships a priority, the already least-well resourced FE and adult provision was taking the greatest hit.

Second, there was considerable concern over the pace of change, whether in funding mechanisms, curriculum content or institutional arrangements.

The survey revealed a picture of sheer frustration as staff said they had little or no opportunity to get on and do a good job

before the rules were changed yet again.

Third, there were serious criticisms of the way funds were being switched away from colleges and other providers, partly as an effort to cut costs, apparently without due regard for the consequences. Notable among such concerns was the greater use of large contractors and a proposal to transfer apprenticeship funding to employers.

Providers echoed concerns expressed by national organisations over the impact on engagement of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Also, the shift of funding for learners with costly, high-level special needs from the colleges to local authorities was attacked for dismantling a system that was understood and worked reasonably well, in favour of one that threatened to destabilise provision and restrict opportunities for vulnerable learners.

Ofsted came in for criticism too, with many respondents sceptical that it was independent of government and damagingly inconsistent in its judgments at local level, despite the inspection framework.

Overall, FE staff did not see government changes to

the sector as educationally legitimate, but rather as politically inspired.

Survey respondents talked frequently of political “interference” or “meddling”. They said that too often there wasn’t a partnership with other stakeholders but a sense that the sector was being “used” by politicians for their own, often short term ends.

Did ministers respond sufficiently to your criticisms 12 months ago? Government rowed back on some issues, such as direct funding of apprenticeships by employers.

But what of other issues such as the status of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the impact of academies and free schools on the sector, the state of careers guidance and the future role of digital technology following the recent House of Lords report? Let us know.

The survey will be conducted over the next two weeks — the closing date for responses is noon on Tuesday, March 17, and the findings will be reported in *FE Week* on Monday, April 27.

Visit feweek.co.uk/skills-survey-2015/ to take part in the 2015 survey.



The FE and Skills Survey of 2015 has today (March 2) been launched and you’ve got a fortnight to have your say.

That’s also two weeks in which to make sure you’re in with a chance of winning a shiny new iPad Air and a year’s subscription to *FE Week*.

The 10-minute survey closes at noon on Monday, March 17, and the findings will be reported in *FE Week* on Monday, April 27.

Respondents can provide contact details within the survey in order to be in with a chance of winning.

Winners will be chosen at random and will be notified within a month of the survey results being reported in *FE Week*.

A detailed report by the Policy Consortium with full analysis will also subsequently be available online.

Those who opt to provide their contact details — so that either the Policy Consortium can email a copy of the analysis of the survey or to enter the *FE Week* prize draw — will have them treated in strict confidence. No-one will subsequently be contacted without their express permission.



EARNING MY PROJECT MANAGEMENT DEGREE FROM THE INSIDE

Michelle Hook, 23 #GetInGoFar

Apprenticeships
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EXPERTS



FE INSIDER

Shane Chown is head of policy & public affairs at Niace and a governor at Westminster Kingsway College. He is also a former Institute for Learning policy officer and ex-vice president of the National Union of Students. His exclusive FE Insider column features in the first FE Week of every month.

Under the skin of the apprenticeships 'hot potato'

The publication of the delayed Skills Funding Agency Grant Letter loomed over National Apprenticeships Week (which starts on March 9) a bit like ... well, anything else that looms.

Whether it was a further cut of 25 per cent to the non-apprenticeship Adult Skills Budget, the 25 per cent increase in the budget for 24+ loans while learner numbers plummet or the £33m cut in learner support funding, it might be a little more difficult for some to get too excited about apprenticeships.

One group of people who have been particularly excited about apprenticeships over the last couple of weeks has been Labour and Conservative politicians, with leaders of both parties giving key education policy speeches recently.

An extra 3m funded apprenticeships were

promised by Prime Minister David Cameron at a Conservative Party policy speech at the end of January, with funding coming from removing housing benefit for 18 to 21-year-olds on Jobseekers' Allowance and reducing the benefit cap from £26,000 to £23,000 per household.

Labour sparked controversy in the sector in February over their plans to only fund apprenticeships at and above level three, leaving us to speculate as to what would happen to the half a million apprentices currently studying at level two.

We should also keep an eye on what's going on in Northern Ireland and Wales whose devolved governments are already set to implement this policy.

Alongside this, Labour leader Ed Miliband alluded to a minimum academic standard young people would need to achieve to gain

access to an apprenticeship, causing some to worry about that the door to apprenticeships would be slammed shut in the faces of young people without a good set of A-levels. Oh, and of course pledging an extra 80,000 apprenticeships a-year for the numbers race.

The Liberal Democrats have put themselves in a fascinating position on apprentice pay.

In October, Business Secretary Vince Cable wrote to the Low Pay Commission (LPC) suggesting that the apprentice rate of the National Minimum Wage should be abolished, and apprentices should instead be entitled to the regular 'age appropriate' minimum wage.

I hadn't realised that apprentices who are paid below £111 a-week were not entitled to statutory sick pay

Unfortunately though, the LPC rejected Dr Cable's recommendation, instead offering an extra 8p to the apprentice minimum wage, bringing it up to £2.80 from October. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is expected to respond formally

to the LPC recommendations later this month and all eyes will be on the Secretary of State to see if he'll abolish the apprentice rate as he wanted to, or bow to the LPC's recommendation.

Call me naive, but if I was him, with two months left in office, I'd go for the former.

We don't talk about the welfare of apprentices enough. I was struck by the story of an apprentice I met at the Association of Colleges' conference in November who works weekends as well as his full time apprenticeship to make ends meet.

Thanks to the National Union of Students (NUS) Forget Me Not report [see page 5] we've now got something to work with, but it's hard to find any response from the sector on this.

One of the many great advantages of being an apprentice should be having access to the benefits of being a student, and an employee. I hadn't realised that apprentices who are paid below £111 a-week were not entitled to statutory sick pay, so the NUS suggestion that statutory sick pay regulations are amended so eligibility is based on hours worked rather than earnings sounds sensible to me.

My message for National Apprenticeship Week 2015 is this; let's celebrate apprentices, their tutors and their employers.

But let's stop making out that the 'quality' of an apprenticeship stops at how shiny their 'gold standard' qualification is, but actually start to look at the quality of learning and working experience.

Oh, and if anyone's got any polling on how impressive the electorate find wrangling over apprenticeship numbers, do let me know.

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Deputy Director, Joint Apprenticeships Unit,
Department for business, Innovation and
Skills/DfE

DAY ONE



BRIAN WISDOM

Chairman, Federation for Industry Sector
Skills and Standards

DAY TWO

The *FE Week* Annual Apprenticeship and exhibition 2015 (AAC2015) will be an unprecedented opportunity for the sector to come together with the delivery of apprenticeship together to learn, share and debate at a time of major reform and on the eve of the General Election.

Taking place on the first two days of National Apprenticeship Week (March 9 to 10) in partnership with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the conference will offer a mixture of key note speeches by Government Ministers and Shadow Ministers, to in-depth practical sessions with Nick Linford and other technical specialists.

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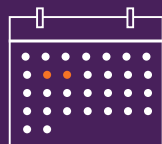
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Where the FE and skills sector leaders of tomorrow will come from is a question on the minds not only of today's principals and managing directors, but also their staff lower down the career ladder whose eyes are fixed firmly on the top, as Nikki Gilbey explains.

As an aspiring college principal, I found the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) summit earlier this year entitled Developing the Leadership Pipeline a great opportunity to look at how the sector provides opportunities for people like me.

I met up at the summit with fellow 29-year-old Oliver Trailor, who is the managing director of Kent independent learning provider Runway Training, having been in contact with him on Twitter about leadership issues.

I have spent the last five years developing my career from lecturer to advanced practitioner and on into a cross college management role, with a recent move to head of learning land-based, alongside time served as academic staff governor and freelance curriculum writer.

Since I wrote a piece for *FE Week* back in May 2013 outlining the reasons behind my principalship ambition, the future principal hashtag (#FuturePrincipal) has been developing on Twitter, with offers of mentoring, guidance and advice flowing in.

But during undoubtedly challenging times for FE and skills, it is all too easy to focus on the present and ignore issues that may present even greater problems down the line, such as poor or even non-existent succession planning.



NIKKI GILBEY
Head of learning, land-based at Chichester College

Getting a leadership foot-up from the middle

Not enough middle managers and aspiring FE leaders are being encouraged to apply for more senior posts, nor given the time to access and learn from senior leaders

While fast-track schemes, well-established routes to management and senior posts exist in other sectors, for example with primary education, they feel as though FE would do well to move away from a time-served to a

more pragmatic approach, encouraging middle managers with the talent and drive to apply for more senior roles.

Supporting staff to complete level five and level seven qualifications in leadership and management is a great start and, as a new manager, I have found such courses invaluable.

However, they are not sector specific and, although my current cohort are mostly FE managers, the course is not aimed solely at developing new leaders to lead outstanding FE organisations in the next decade or two.

Knowledge-sharing activities, such as shadowing, can be invaluable experiences and present senior leaders with an opportunity to give something back, while ensuring the sector is providing opportunities for future leaders to gain an insight into the world of senior leadership.

Yet in terms of truly developing a leadership pipeline, I believe not enough middle managers and aspiring FE leaders are being encouraged to apply for more senior posts, nor given the time to access and learn

from senior leaders.

Oliver and I have both been going against the grain though, actively pursuing opportunities to learn from senior leaders.

We are both openly ambitious and keen to drive forward opportunities for middle managers to gain exposure to senior leaders and benefit from these experiences in the same way mentoring schemes work so successfully in other sectors.

In December, Oliver visited Doncaster College and spent time with the principal and deputy principal, who talked him through their career paths, the type of leaders they are and what they look for in aspiring leaders.

The visit also gave him an insight into the everyday challenges found in leading such a large organisation, and how the senior management team had fostered a culture of transforming lives.

Shadowing is an incredibly useful activity that has great value when planned well. However, there is nowhere for middle managers at present, with existing mechanisms for knowledge-sharing predominantly aimed at the top, ie for deputy principals and above, rather than for those looking to secure their first senior leadership position.

We are currently working with the ETF as it develops The Leadership Register, which is aimed at bringing leaders together from across the FE sector. It hopes the register will provide a platform for both aspiring leaders and existing senior leaders to share ideas and provide opportunities for aspiring leaders to learn from those in senior positions and share best practice.

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ZOE LEWIS
Principal, Middlesbrough College

Direct recruitment paying off for young learners, but ‘reputational risk’ remains for colleges

Middlesbrough College was one of the first seven general FE colleges to directly recruit learners from the age of 14 two years ago. Zoe Lewis outlines the lessons learned since then.

In early 2012, Middlesbrough College was considering developing a direct offer for 14-year-olds from September of that year.

The rationale was clear, GCSE results in the town were not good enough, disengagement levels and exclusions were high in secondary schools and the college believed it could do better for many young people.

However, we had no track record, no real experience of offering full time 14 to 16 provision and also had to seriously consider the impact that this could have on our relationship with local schools.

After long deliberations and careful analysis of the risks, costs and opportunities for schools and the college, the governing body determined we would start a modest full time offer, in partnership with one local school and the pupil referral unit.

There were two primary drivers for this decision. Firstly, we could start small and build up our expertise at minimal risk to us and the students involved, and secondly, we would not risk damaging the relationship with local schools and thereby ensure we maintain good access to help inform future students about their post-16 options.

However there were drawbacks to this approach too. We knew that ‘partnership’ meant schools selecting students they felt would fair best in a college environment.

We were realistic that this would also mean students who would be unlikely to get five GCSEs including English and maths. Nevertheless, we were resolute in our belief that we could provide a positive alternative route for these young people.

We therefore went into this partnership with our eyes wide open and commenced open discussions with the Department for Education (DfE) on the league table impact to determine the level of risk we would be taking on under this scenario.

The DfE has maintained its willingness

to engage in this debate, to understand the issues we are facing and to sympathise with our dilemma, but to date has fallen short of making any league table concessions for colleges offering 14 to 16 ‘alternative’ provision.

This does continue to represent a significant reputational risk for colleges through, for example, poor comparative league table positions and potential floor target triggers, without the context and narrative attached.

In addition to this reputational risk, the college was aware that college funding was simply not sufficient to pay for the additional support needs of these students and so last year, our first year, we ran the provision at a considerable loss.

However, notwithstanding all of the above, for the young people involved, the results have been quite remarkable.

We have therefore expanded our provision this year, recruiting a further 15 Year 10 students from six partner schools, all of whom are of a similar profile to last year’s intake.

So what have we learned? Well, an awful lot.

The welfare and behavioural needs, the information provided by schools (or lack of it), the ‘set-up’ time and the funding issues all provided significant challenges for us last year and we are happy to share our lessons learned.

This year, our second year, has proven far more straightforward. The transition from school has worked well.

Our initial testing has been developed further, our curriculum offer has continued to develop, our welfare arrangements improved and our commercial arrangement with

schools been refined so they now pay a top-up sum to us to help cover our real delivery costs. Was this the high quality ‘parity of esteem’, vocational offer that Professor Alison Wolf had in mind for our talented 14-year-olds? I am not sure.

The DfE has fallen short of making any league table concessions for colleges offering 14 to 16 ‘alternative’ provision

Is it transforming lives and making our communities better places? Without a doubt.

So, where are we going next with this. Well to a large extent, that depends upon how the DfE responds to the first wave of college league table results which will be published next year.

While Progress 8 [a performance measure set to be introduced in 2016/17 that will recognise providers that “offer a broad and balanced curriculum”] may help our league table position over the longer term, the reality is that there are still many practical barriers preventing a whole scale take-up of this across the college sector.

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ALEX PRATT

Chair of the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (Lep) and chair of the management board of the Lep Network

Colleges ‘should see budgets diminish’ if their Leps case isn’t strong enough

Skills Funding Agency (SFA) guidance on how college budgets could be affected by their relationship — or lack thereof — with Leps last week caused concern within the sector. Alex Pratt addresses fears about Leps and their power over funding.

Are you wondering what the point of Leps is, why on earth we need another set of institutions, and just how they are supposed to fit with the already complex skills governance arrangements? If so, read on.

We stand alone among the leading western democracies having such over-centralised economic power and decision-making. Nationally conceived, silo-delivered policies at the pace of government offer a poor substitute for the strategic integration of the means of growth at the level of the places in which our firms actually exist.

Growth is delivered inside businesses, every business needs what it needs, when it needs it, and not according to a well-meaning policy timetable.

Furthermore, businesses exist in the places from which they largely draw the necessary means of production.

There is only one growth sin worse than denying our growth businesses what they need to add value and grow the tax take, and that is making it wastefully available when they don’t need or have an appetite for it. Timing is everything. Every opportunity is time-specific and the speed of innovative progress is the currency of competition.

Skills are undeniably a major underpinning component of growth in so far as they impact on the available labour pool, a fundamental factor of production on which all economic growth is founded. On this everyone agrees.

In England we have some of the most innovative, professional, capable learning providers on the planet, and inevitably some which are less well-led. It would be remarkable were it to be any different. On this everyone agrees.

The dual purposes of upskilling an individual to improve their life chances while enhancing the pool of labour available to firms in their quest for competitiveness and productivity are both denied if skills provision does not match the needs of businesses. This makes a close and effective relationship between skills providers and businesses at the level of places an essential growth component. On this everyone agrees.

It would therefore have been beyond disbelief had the SFA pronounced that colleges should ignore Leps and not be

required to demonstrate a productive constructive relationship with them. Would it not?

Furthermore, in a highly competitive environment for very tight resources those Leps, colleges and private learning providers who fail the mutual engagement test, should surely all be disadvantaged against their more mature, more constructive competitors?

Let’s be honest, if colleges are unsuccessful in making a powerful enough case for skills investment against the alternatives of roads and buses to Leps looking to drive their local economies forward, they should expect to see budgets diminish, else why bother with an economic prioritisation exercise in the first place?

Are the strengths, scale and approach of the 39 Leps highly variable and is there huge scope for improvement in communications within and between individual Leps? You bet there is. We are nothing if not realistic about the challenges we face.

Are Leps a panacea for economic growth? Of course not.

If colleges are unsuccessful in making a powerful enough case for skills investment against the alternatives of roads and buses to Leps looking to drive their local economies forward, they should expect to see budgets diminish

They are, however, an essential missing component in orchestrating the necessary foundations for growth in the image of the private sector firms we rely upon to deliver it.

We all understand just how important skills are to our economic future and it has to be in our mutual interests to work hand in glove together, as challenging as that can sometimes be.



SUE PEMBER

Former director of FE and skills investment and performance at the Department for Business, Innovation and skills and ex-Canterbury College principal

Taking a lead on technology

Further education leaders hold the key to unlocking technology in the sector, according to the government review of progress a year after the recommendations of the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group. Dr Sue Pember looks at what this means for leaders.

It seems we really are now on the edge of a digital/technological revolution. I know we have said that lots of times, but we are really there.

The government review of progress on the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group recommendations said “it will be the leadership of the sector that will make it happen”.

I would go further — it has to be everyone working together.

Leaders do need to take control and have a plan showing how their college is going use technology to improve governance, management processes, teaching and learning, assessment, communication and underpinning systems

It is very positive that government has taken a lead and the work that Jisc, the Education and Training Foundation and Gazelle are doing will ensure the infrastructure will support this development.

The real revolution, however, will come when every college governor, leader, teacher and support worker embraces technology and has their own ambitious action plan.

When I think back to my time as a college lecturer all we had to get excited about was a grant to purchase a CAD machine and whether we could count our students on computer and produce electronic registers within two weeks of term starting.

All that sounds a bit tame now but, the CAD machine did introduce a new ways of thinking about delivery and supported new joint projects with industry in North London.

Now we can do all the things we wished for. The technology is out there and our students know how to use it, so let’s join them and make our college environment, processes, systems, learning content and delivery methods take full advantage.

We can already do real time online enrolment, set up automatic late comer prompts by text and, instantly converse with our students and staff through Twitter.

We can tell the world about our achievements through blogs and put our best practice on YouTube.

Our teaching staff can supplement their learning materials by picking up the best content from various sources. Why reinvent the wheel when the material is out there?

We can make our subjects come alive. For example, in geography, we can use a host of scientific websites and stream content into the classroom with live shots of volcanoes.

For fashion students, we can download the Paris fashion shows.

And, students following politics, can critique Wednesday PM Questions live. Some primary schools are already there by using quality YouTube material that puts fun into learning times tables.

So leaders do need to take control and have a plan showing how their college is going use technology to improve governance, management processes, teaching and learning, assessment, communication and underpinning systems.

But that is not enough — every member of staff should have their own plan.

Lecturers need to show how they are going to bring online learning into their delivery.

Support staff should indicate what new systems and working practices they intend to adopt, and senior managers need to make room for development, and find the funds.

Governors need to assure plans are met and lead by example through adopting e-governance ways of working.

We need to put programming and coding on the agenda — teach it, learn it and appoint staff who can do it.

And we need to get out there with our students and visit high-tech industry partners — it is so incredible to see how technology is changing the workplace.

But don’t get me wrong, while I really do believe the time is right to create the technological environment with online delivery and content being the norm, nothing can substitute the real learning and intellectual development gained by interacting with gifted teachers and peers.

We might be able to source material and content from the web, but we cannot replace real life interface, connection and enthusiasm for a subject, and that is what the students of the future will come to college for.

Mick Fletcher takes a closer look at the skills funding letter to see what else it indicates other than a depressing budget cut of up to 24 per cent for providers next academic year.

Much of the response to the skills funding letter published today has concentrated on the effective 24 per cent cut to the adult skills budget. It is shocking even if wholly predictable.

The consequence will be further cuts in provision and cuts further down the line too as funding for franchise partners, often for work with the most disadvantaged communities, is withdrawn to help balance the books.

An increase in the loan allocation will be of little help since institutions are clearly struggling to make use of what they already have.

These cuts need to be seen alongside the collapse in part time higher education, the closure of libraries up and down the land and the drop in workforce training offered by employers.

Taken together they mean that the opportunities for individuals to better themselves through education are shrinking fast.

Along with the figures, however, the grant letter gives interesting evidence of the growing marginalisation of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

Six out of the 14 funding lines in the document are managed by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) or some agency other than the SFA, which must encourage speculation about its future.



MICK FLETCHER

Mick Fletcher is a founder member of the Policy Consortium, a director of RCU Ltd, a visiting research fellow at the Institute of Education, University of London, and a regular contributor to the FE Week Experts section

Bad news for adult learning but not good for SFA either

There have been rumours in the past about merging BIS with the Department for Education in order to bring all education back under one roof, but the transfer of at least some BIS activities around ‘remedial’ education to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) looks equally likely. Either way I wouldn’t bet on the SFA lasting until Christmas.

A careful reading of the funding letter enables one to see two possible strands of a future settlement.

One of them gives slight grounds for optimism and the other more cause for alarm. The choice will be affected but not wholly determined by outcome of the election so those in the sector need to read the signs carefully.

The optimistic vision of the future is the reflection in adult education of wider trends towards devolution.

The recent, supposedly ‘premature’ SFA letter outlining ways in which Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) can influence

adult skills budgets was widely criticised, but local influence (as opposed to detailed second guessing of institutional management) must be right.

To the extent that local authorities can add a broader community vision and some democratic legitimacy to the enthusiasm and employer engagement brought by LEP’s localism offers more opportunities than threats.

There is a chance that adult education might be rescued by localities even as it is abandoned by the centre; after all the FE system was mainly built locally in the absence of any coherent national vision and finds its strongest support in local communities rather than the corridors of Whitehall.

The less optimistic future concerns the retention by BIS of funds for individual pet projects of which perhaps the most egregious example is the Employer Ownership pilots; their funding is up by 17 per cent despite a track record of success that is all but invisible.

The shadowy process for identifying new National Colleges is another example of opportunistic politics.

The risk is that any rational architecture for setting policy priorities for investment in adult education is undermined by an expansion of the pork-barrel politics associated with City Deals, where every public investment is timed and framed to suit short term political agendas rather than wider public need.

Colleges and other providers may be able to influence how these competing trends play out. If they give their active support to the local coalitions that are emerging in and

The grant letter gives interesting evidence of the growing marginalisation of the Skills Funding Agency

around our major cities they may find that civic pride and a care for communities is a better source of support for adult education than the narrow economic instrumentalism that motivates BIS.

If they resist then the risk is that future arrangements will not only be short of funding but also short of any transparent logic.

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Mark and Sam develop time-saving doctors' app



Barking & Dagenham College students Mark Bewes, left, and Sam Bowen with mentor and manager of 2Fix Solutions (an IT business and shop at the college) Ellen Kerr

Two Barking and Dagenham College students used their IT skills learned in the classroom to help design an app aimed to save time for mental health doctors. Working with North East London NHS Foundation Trust's (NELFT) medical education department, Mark Bewes and Sam Bowen, both aged 26 and on an access to IT courses, were commissioned to provide the technical platform to bring the new Doctors On Call Support (Docs) app to life.

The app can be accessed from any smart phone or tablet and replaces hundreds of pages of online guidance documents, including policies and procedures which are stored on the NELFT intranet and internet.

Mark said: "It has been a rewarding project because the NELFT Docs app has a valuable purpose. Giving students exposure to real client briefs is what makes the Barking and Dagenham College experience so different."



Oaklands College Wolves women's basketball team celebrate their victory over Oxford City Hoops. Inset: MVP Kyla Nelson, aged 17, left and captain Beth Sarson, 18, who studies a level three diploma in sport development, coaching and fitness

College girls on the ball to help Wolves team to national glory

Oaklands College's Wolves women's basketball team are celebrating after shooting their way to victory at a national final.

The Wolves were crowned champions of the Basketball England women's national final after outscoring Oxford City Hoops of 73-54.

Held at Leeds Beckett University, the Wolves had Kyla Nelson to thank for her outstanding performance after scoring 19 points and nine rebounds resulting in the 17-year-old being named Most Value Player (MVP).

Kyla, who is doing A-levels at the college, said: "It was a fantastic performance by all the team and I was thrilled to be named MVP. "We stayed together as a team and kept playing our style. We need to keep up our level for the remaining league games so that we move into the playoffs on a positive."

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CAMPUS ROUND-UP

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Woodwork award for joiner Ben



Ben James being presented with his British Woodworking Federation's Apprentice of the Year award by Paul Gaze, federation support manager, Construction Industry Training Board

A Rugby College joinery apprentice chipped his way to success after being named the British Woodworking Federation's Apprentice of the Year.

Ben James, aged 20, joined the college four years ago before starting as a work experience student at local firm Tompkins Joinery and then advancing on as an apprentice.

Combining his work with his studies, he has progressed from a level two to

three apprenticeship.

He currently studies one day a-week at Rugby College, with the rest of his time spent working for his employer and has already completed a few high profile projects of his own, including the joinery for Dallas Burston Polo Club.

Ben said: "When I heard my name read out it was a shock, but I was really happy. It was great to be nominated by my employers as it shows they have faith in your ability."



Oasis and Verve album designer Brian Cannon (centre) with staff and students at Wigan and Leigh College

Album designer definitely maybe delivers 'fantastic' talk

Wigan & Leigh College's budding graphic designers definitely maybe got an industry treat with a visit from Oasis and Verve album designer Brian Cannon.

Mr Cannon shared his career experiences with students including how chance meetings with musicians Noel Gallagher and Richard Ashcroft led him to design fame.

He also spoke about how his first album

sleeve for the The Verve was produced in Mesnes Park, only a stone's throw away from the college's Parson's Walk Centre.

David Beattie, foundation degree lecturer for graphic design, said: "It was fantastic for students to meet the man behind some of music's most iconic album designs of all time."

"It encourages students not to forget about the traditional ways of working, rather than simply relying on modern day technology."

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 FE Week Annual Apprenticeship
 Conference & Exhibition**

**Venue: Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre,
 Westminster, London**

Date: 9 - 10 March 2015

For more information visit: feweekAAC15.co.uk

Church makeover gives ‘shy learners’ new confidence

A team of once shy and unqualified students from St Helens College are conquering their self-esteem issues with a challenging community renovation project as part of their 12-week Prince’s Trust programme, writes Billy Camden.

Thirteen learners who turned to St Helens College to overcome confidence issues have given a local parish church and hall a much-needed facelift.

Part of the college’s Prince’s Trust Team 70, the students picked up their paint pots and carried out extensive DIY work to freshen St Helens Parish Church and Hall.

The project, which was selected by the students, is part of the 12-week Prince’s Trust self-development course and aims to build students’ confidence, motivation and life skills.

Ellis Mooney, aged 20 and from Team 70, said: “The course has been a great opportunity for me to build up my self-esteem and develop new skills.

“Since leaving school I’ve studied on several courses but due to a busy home life I’ve not been able to commit myself to a course or career.

“After hearing about The Prince’s Trust Team programme, I thought it would bring some discipline and direction into my life and it has done just that.”

The programme also provides students aged 16 to 25 with the opportunity to gain



St Helens College Prince’s Trust Team 70 handover the renovated church

recognised qualifications and to progress onto courses at the college.

Raluca Elena Huibah, 17, said: “I came to England in November after moving from my home country of Romania.

“I discovered the course while at the college’s open evening and thought it would be a great way for me to meet new people, make friends and develop my English.

“I hoped the course would provide me with the opportunity to help the local community too and I’m hoping to start my A-level studies in September.”

Paula Rowlett, team leader of The Prince’s Trust Team 70, said: “The project was a complete success. The church committee now say the rooms are more usable and are

now looking into the possibilities of how the hall could be hired out for more events.”

The college programme started January 6 and is due to be finished on March 27, and Ms Rowlett says she has already seen a big change in the learners.

“The students have grown immensely since the beginning of the programme,” she said.

“From the shy learners that came into their first interview, worried about how the

programme will go and if they would really enhance their confidence, to them showing guests and the Mayor around the community project so confidently and professionally.

“Three students even gave a speech in front of the guests. I’m really proud of their progression.”

She added: “They have realised that everyone has confidence issues in some way, also that you shouldn’t judge a person on how they look and should get to know them first.”

The team are now planning their final challenges including a sponsored walk.

Their achievements will be marked with a presentation evening held at the college March 25.



St Helens Parish Church

a sponsored walk.



DO YOU WANT TO BE IN CAMPUS ROUND-UP?
Send your stories with pictures to campus@feweek.co.uk including names, ages and course details of students where applicable



PRIME Apprenticeship profiling & contract management

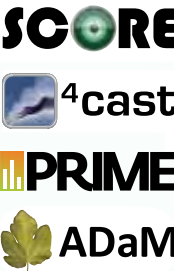
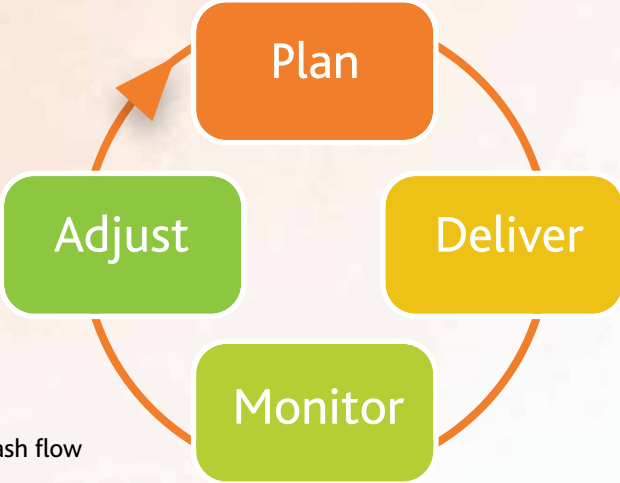
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Your weekly guide
to who's new and
who's leaving

Dr Lynne Sedgmore's seven-year stint as executive director of the 157 Group is to come to an end later this year with her retirement.

It will bring an end to a 35-year FE sector career that includes the chief executive role at the Centre for Excellence in Leadership for four years from 2004.

Previous roles include principal of Guildford College, vice principal of Croydon College and head of Croydon Business School.

"I have loved my 35 years in the sector and have never wanted to be anywhere else," she said.

"The work that FE colleges do for a huge cross spectrum of students is totally amazing, we truly transform lives for the better. I will miss colleagues and professional friends but in my 60th year, it feels time for a new and different life. I have plenty of things I want to do, places to go and adventures still to be had."

Dr Sedgmore is expected to step down with the appointment of her replacement.

Sarah Robinson, 157 Group chair and chief

executive of Stoke on Trent College, said:

"Lynne has been instrumental in helping to raise the profile of FE, highlighting the social and economic mission of FE colleges and the important role they play in collaborating with employers and others to develop local economies.

"She has stimulated debate, supported research and facilitated the sharing of effective practice across the sector, especially in teaching and learning."

Meanwhile, bosses at City College Brighton and Hove — visited by FE Commissioner Dr David Collins at the start of February over financial concerns — have appointed Monica Box interim principal while they look for a full-time replacement for Lynn Thackway.

Ms Box's first principalship came in 2001 at Calderdale College, in West Yorkshire.

More recently, she has worked as an interim principal at times of change to a number of colleges, including City College Manchester, South Kent College, Kensington & Chelsea College and most recently she was interim chief executive at the Barnfield Federation.



Dr Lynne Sedgmore



Monica Box



Lynn Thackway

"When I visited Brighton college I was very impressed with the passion and pride of governors and staff for both the college and the communities served by the college," she said.

"This kind of commitment is half the battle in any organisational success and I very much look forward to assisting in the creation of a bright future for City College Brighton and Hove."

Julie Nerney, chair of the grade two-rated City College's board of governors, said: "Monica brings a wealth of experience, coupled with a strong people focus and the board is confident she will bring clarity, focus and an open leadership style to the college over the coming months.

"This appointment will create the time and space for the recruitment process of our new permanent post holder, which will start in early March. We will also be looking to make

permanent appointments to this post and the two other vacancies in our executive team."

Ms Thackway left her role at the start of the month citing family reasons. She became principal in August 2012 having left her deputy principal's post at the Barnfield Federation.

She said: "It is with great regret that I have made the difficult decision to step down from my role as principal of City College which has a very special place in my heart. At this moment, I need to put my family first but when my family situation has improved I will return to the sector I am so passionate about."

A college spokesperson said: "The board of governors is grateful for Lynn's hard work for the college during a very challenging time for the FE sector nationally, would like to thank her for her contribution and wish her every success for the future."

To let us know of any new faces at the top of your college, independent learning provider, awarding organisation or other sector body email news@feweek.co.uk



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Director of Policy and External Relations

Remuneration by negotiation, based on 70 days per annum

HOLEX, the national network of local adult learning providers, seeks a proactive individual to lead on policy work for members, and to undertake external facing activity. Core services sought include:

- generating information, analysis and advice to HOLEX member organisations, including updating members on current policy specific to community learning and skills, and the wider education and training field
- leading termly HOLEX Network Events
- facilitating inter-provider networking, including online forums
- co-ordinating the work of the HOLEX Policy Forum
- supporting HOLEX Theme Leads in their representation of member interests, and in responding to member queries
- enhancing and further developing HOLEX relations with national agencies and sector partners
- undertaking key representational functions with BIS, DfE, SFA, EFA, OFSTED and the Education and Training Foundation
- contributing papers for Board meetings.

The postholder will work closely with the HOLEX Operations Officer to develop ways of working, and is expected to display business acumen, including the potential for income generation.

Application pack available from holexsupport@aol.com
Closing date 13th March 2015; interviews to be held w/c 23rd March

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www.tribalgroup.com/aboutus/workingfortribal/Pages/Vacancies.aspx

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Tribal is an equal opportunities employer and has publicly committed to this by signing up to the Two Ticks Positive About Disabled People scheme. This ensures that all disabled applicants, able to demonstrate that they meet the minimum criteria of the job description, are guaranteed an interview.



One college many successes



Barnet and Southgate College is a highly successful Further Education college with 4 campuses in North London and around 21,000 students of all ages. This is a great opportunity to join us in a leadership role.

Deputy Director
A-levels, Digital & Creative Technologies
Salary £65k per annum

We are looking for an exceptional individual to join our extended leadership group who can motivate and lead a curriculum team to ensure that every student is inspired to reach and exceed their potential.

We require an experienced leader who will build on the strengths of our existing curriculum provision and who shares our philosophy of making students the most highly-prized in the employment and academic marketplace.

This is one of two new roles within the management structure following a restructure in July 2014 and will be pivotal in leading the development of a destination-driven curriculum and contributing to the delivery of our aspirational strategic plan.

The successful candidate will have a proven track record of providing exceptional leadership with the ability to build on past successes and inspire, motivate and lead staff and learners to make our ambitious vision a reality.

You will be a strategic thinker with the ability to build relationships both internally with staff and students and externally with key industry partners to ensure our learners receive an excellent learning experience and develop the skills required, whilst at the College, to achieve their further education and career aspirations.



If you believe that you have the vision, skills, expertise and enthusiasm to make a difference and help us realise our ambition, we want to hear from you.

For further information about the post please go to:
www.barnetsouthgate.ac.uk/the-college/job-vacancies
Alternatively, please call 020 8275 3992 or email jobs@barnetsouthgate.ac.uk

Closing date: 2pm on 13th March 2015
Interviews: 26th March 2015
All appointments are subject to an Enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure & Barring Service.

Join us in supporting the future healthcare workforce

The National Skills Academy for Health works with employers and training providers to ensure the healthcare support workforce gets the training they need to do the job they love, creating and maintaining the high quality health service we all want. Our vision, and that of the employers we work with, is to create a qualified and transferable workforce, with every individual recognised and valued for the skills they have, and encouraged and enabled to develop the skills they want and need.

Contracts and Programmes Manager

London or Home Based with frequent travel to London | Circa £40k

As part of the National Skills Academy for Health (NSA Health) and reporting to the NSA Health Head of Operations, the Contracts and Programmes Manager will be responsible for management of the organisations contracts with Skills Funding Agency, Health Education England and Department of Health. This will include the Adult Skills Budget which is held by Skills for Health but managed operationally through the NSA Health.

The post holder will work closely with the Head of Operations to deliver timely and accurate data, reports and funding claims which are able to be authenticated by robust external and internal scrutiny. The post holder will develop new and existing effective working relationships with organisations and agencies who place contracts and commissions with us.

Head of Skills and Development

Home based with extensive travel | Circa £45k

The post holder will make a significant contribution to the success of the National Skills Academy for Health (NSAH). Reporting to the Director, the Head of Skills and Development will be a key member of the senior management team of the NSA Health, ensuring good governance and contributing to the development and delivery of

strategic, operational and financial plans. The post holder will lead the work undertaken by the NSA Health and Skills for Health Academy to develop new learning programmes, resources and other interventions intended to improve skills development among the health care support workforce.

Data Analysis and Reporting Officer

London with some national travel | Up to £25k

As part of the National Skills Academy for Health (NSA Health) and reporting to the NSA Contracts and Programmes Manager, the Data Analysis and Reporting Officer and will be expected to act with a level of autonomy, using skills, experience and initiative. They will be responsible for delivery of timely and accurate data, reports and funding claims in relation to a range of contracts and programmes, including Skills Funding Agency Adult Skills Budget provision.

The post holder will work under the direction of the Contracts and Programmes Manager to ensure that all data returns are compiled, verified through associated tools (e.g. DSATs) and validated. They will work within defined parameters to ensure that amendments to data or funding claims are done in a structured, measured and auditable manner, compliant with applicable funding rules and regulations.

For full information on these roles, please visit: www.nsahealth.org.uk/vacancies

Closing Date: 23rd March 2015

The National Skills Academy for Health work with employers to facilitate a wide range of accredited and none accredited programmes nationally to meet sector and employer needs These programmes include,

- Pre-employment training to support entry level recruitment into the sector
- Apprenticeship programmes in Business and Administration, Health and Social Care, Clinical Health Skills and other health related areas
- Leadership and Management, Coaching, Mentoring, Learning and Development and other programmes relating to professional skills and behaviour

We are keen to hear from qualified assessors with experience in delivering across one or more of the above listed areas, particularly Apprenticeship delivery in Health and Social Care, Clinical Health Care Support, Business Administration and Optical Retail.

To apply, please send your CV to recruitment@nsahealth.org.uk

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Assistant Principal, Director of A Level Studies

up to £55k plus relocation





Located on a modern and well-resourced campus in Street, Strode College is a tertiary college serving a number of small towns and dispersed rural communities in the Mendip District of Somerset, an area of outstanding natural beauty. With a significant majority of students in the 16-18 age group, the College is the largest provider of A levels in the area and has a small but growing Higher Education offering. We also have an expanding number of apprenticeships and provide education and training for businesses and the unemployed.

Judged **Outstanding** by Ofsted in October 2014, the College is in the top 5% of state schools and colleges nationally for student progress over the last three years as measured by ALPs. We are not complacent, however, and are determined to build on this platform to provide an even better service to the communities we serve.

This is one of three Assistant Principal posts reporting directly to the Principal. Whilst a relentless commitment to excellence is a central feature of the role, sharing our values, particularly in terms of

treating all our students as individuals, is equally important. You'll play a key part in ensuring that our reputation with partners, especially our partner schools, remains strong, and that our curriculum continues to adapt and respond.

This is a significant career development opportunity for an ambitious education leader looking to expand their responsibilities and join a successful and highly-motivated senior team in a College that won't settle for second best. If you are an outstanding teacher, with a track record of successful leadership of a large A Level department, or curriculum area with sizeable A Level provision, and the ambition and drive to match that of the college, we would like to hear from you.

For more information visit www.strodeap.co.uk or contact Trudy Searle or Mike Galloway at Navigate, our recruitment partners on **07791 090141 / 07765 595758** for a confidential discussion. Closing date: 23 March. Final interviews: 16/17 April.



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Professional Development and Quality Improvement Manager

Salary: £25,000-28,000.00 per annum



The Association of South East Colleges (AOSEC) is the regional organisation representing Further Education Colleges in the South East and is affiliated to the Association of Colleges.

AOSEC is a registered charity and works with, supports and represents over 60 colleges and partner organisations to provide world-class education and skills in the post compulsory education and training sector across the South East region.

A vacancy has arisen to join our dynamic and innovative organisation. We are looking for a Professional Development and Quality Improvement Manager to play a key role in delivering the events strategy and be responsible for the preparation, delivery and evaluation of AOSEC's professional development and quality improvement services and events.

This post would be ideally suited to someone wishing to use the skills they have gained working in the sector to help support colleagues from the sector.

This challenging and fast paced job presents an ideal opportunity to use your experience and develop your expertise by managing and organising a diverse portfolio of professional development events and projects. You will also develop, manage and maintain effective relationships with key partners to influence implementation of Government policy, ensuring that further education institutions can continue to thrive.

A job description and application form is available to download from www.aosec.org.uk

Applicants are also welcome to speak with Pamela Lumsden, CEO, to discuss the position further. Please call 01483 235289 to arrange an informal discussion.



RECRUITING FUNCTIONAL SKILLS TUTORs IN MATHS AND ENGLISH

The Skills Network, a leading training provider, is currently recruiting full and part-time flexible Functional Skills tutors, to support learners while they work to complete our blended learning Functional Skills/GCSE qualification in English and Maths.

ABOUT THE ROLE

As a Functional Skills tutor you will be responsible for providing face to face support to learners in half-day sessions at a local venue. And or you will provide remote/online subject specific support to learners, as well as providing encouragement and feedback with the assistance of Learner Support and Retention Advisors. You will be required to liaise with the Learner Support Advisors in our office, regarding support for learners and any areas of concern. Once appointed you will need to attend an induction/training day at a Mercia venue.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO YOU NEED?

All applicants are expected to hold a relevant qualification in the following areas:

- A teaching qualification PTTLs/CTTLs/DTTLs/Cert Ed/ PGCE or equivalent (or working towards)
- Level 3 in Maths and/or English
- Experience in supporting the delivery of functional skills in FE.

To apply for a role, please visit www.theskillsnetwork.com to download an application form and send your completed form to careers@theskillsnetwork.com

Teachers of English

Salary: £24,142 – £34,194 p.a. (or £36,840 - £39,466 if eligible for the PSP scale) inclusive of London weighting
Start date: August 2015



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We are presently seeking two excellent teachers for A Level and GCSE English, to make a significant contribution to our successful English and Modern Foreign Languages programme area.

In order to be considered for this role, you will be qualified to teach within a sixth form college and be able to demonstrate exceptional classroom management and organisational skills, as well as have a successful track record of raising the standard of attainment and aspirations of students.

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For further information and to apply, please go to www.leyton.ac.uk

Please note that CVs will not be accepted for this role.

For any queries about the role, please email jobs@leyton.ac.uk or call us on 020 8928 9000.

Closing date for applications: 10.00 a.m. on Friday 13th March 2015

Leyton Sixth Form College has a strong commitment to safeguarding students and safe recruitment. All posts are subject to enhanced DBS clearance.





These are exciting times for the Isle of Wight College as we continue to build on our outstanding reputation and work towards our strategic aim to be the lead post-16 education provider on the Isle of Wight. The recent, successful acquisition of government funding has enabled us to develop a new STEM building on campus, due to be completed by the start of the academic year 2015/16. This will allow us to offer state of the art facilities and resources to our students, giving them the best possible learning opportunities.

Lecturers in Maths – VC 608

39 hours per week
Up to £35,000 per annum plus Market Supplement & Relocation Allowance

We are looking to recruit for a number of lecturers within our Maths provision. If you possess the commitment and passion to motivate and enthuse your students to develop the skills and attributes that will lead them to an exceptional future, then we want to hear from you.

With a recognised teaching qualification you will be an enthusiastic, innovative and dedicated lecturer with a demonstrable track record of helping students achieve excellence.

We are exceptionally proud of our island; it really is a beautiful, tranquil and unique place to live and work. From the bustling seaport villages of Cowes and Yarmouth to the popular holiday destinations of Sandown, Shanklin, and Ventnor, the Isle of Wight has a location to suit everyone. Shop til you drop in the upcoming county town of Newport, home to the College, or enjoy stunning views across the Solent and Channel on a coastal walk. Soak up the history, explore and unwind; you will be sure to receive a very warm welcome! The island also offers excellent and reliable links to the mainland.

Graduate Trainee Lecturer of Maths – VC 610

39 hours per week
£24,067 – £28,720 per annum plus Market Supplement & Relocation Allowance

We are looking to recruit an inspirational graduate as a trainee lecturer to deliver maths, across the age and ability range GCSE/Functional Skills students. If you possess the commitment and passion to motivate and enthuse your students to develop the skills and attributes that will lead them to an exceptional future, then we want to hear from you.

Successful candidates will have a degree in maths or a closely related subject e.g. engineering and will possess the enthusiasm, innovation and dedication to help students achieve excellence.

You will be passionate about maths, with a desire to develop this across the college. In return the Isle of Wight College will support the candidate's professional competence and development including teacher training.

The Isle of Wight College is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from all members of the Community. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Successful applicants will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Closing Date: 12th March 2015

For further information please refer to our website: www.iwcollege.ac.uk, or for an application pack email: recruitment@iwcollege.ac.uk

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FE Week Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares
making sure that each row, column and
3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Spot the difference
to WIN an FE Week mug



	7		1		8		2	
2	4						6	7
		3				5		
			3	6	1			
			4	5	9			
		1				8		
9	3						4	2
	8		6		7		9	

Difficulty:
EASY

	2	5	7					6
	6			3				5
7					4			
	7			5				
8		1				3		4
				1			8	
				9				2
2				8				6
6					5	1	9	

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

Last Week's solutions

7	8	2	3	1	4	5	9	6
1	5	9	6	7	8	3	4	2
6	4	3	5	2	9	8	7	1
4	1	6	8	5	7	9	2	3
9	3	5	4	6	2	1	8	7
8	2	7	9	3	1	6	5	4
3	9	1	2	4	5	7	6	8
2	6	8	7	9	3	4	1	5
5	7	4	1	8	6	2	3	9

Difficulty:
EASY

6	7	9	2	8	1	5	4	3
2	1	3	6	5	4	9	7	8
8	4	5	3	7	9	6	1	2
7	6	4	1	9	3	8	2	5
3	8	1	5	4	2	7	9	6
9	5	2	7	6	8	4	3	1
1	9	7	8	2	6	3	5	4
5	2	8	4	3	7	1	6	9
4	3	6	9	1	5	2	8	7

Difficulty:
MEDIUM



Spot **five** differences. First correct entry wins an FE Week mug. Text your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to 07969 166 374.

The last edition's spot the difference winner was Chris Barnes (pictured right), PR and marketing officer at Coleg Gwent, in Newport, South Wales.

